



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

BIBLICAL CRITICISM IN SOME OF ITS THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL RELATIONS.

By Rev. JAMES TEN BROEKE, PH.D.,
Burlington, Vermont.

I.

I wish to show that the higher criticism and its results have a necessary relation to theology and philosophy, believing that the correct understanding of this relation would be to the advantage of all who are interested in the study of the Bible.

What is the higher criticism? It is the product of many centuries. The period of the church, from Augustine to the twelfth century, was given largely to ecclesiastical organization as a ruling power. Philosophy was dead. The ancient world with its literature and its literary mind had perished. Church polity was everything. The period from the twelfth to the sixteenth century was more significant for theology. In the middle of the fifteenth century, the church had reached its limit of power and was sinking under its corruption. The mediæval system was ready to fall before the shock from the revival of learning. The recovery of the ancient literatures, consequent upon the fall of Constantinople, brought the old world back and forced its comparison with the new. The beauty of the classic in contrast with the modern Latin awoke the perception of style. With the sense for style the faculty of criticism was aroused. The recovered literature was studied critically from the modern point of view. Among the varied results, was the discovery that the pretended donation of Constantine was a forgery, and that the real Aristotle was broader than the scholastic Aristotle—information very unwelcome to the Catholic Church. Plato and Socrates gained new followers. Scholars sought to determine the age and

authorship of anonymous writings. In such investigations, the higher criticism had its beginning.

The method and principles of the criticism which was directed to ancient literature are illustrated by the contest which took place later between Bentley and Boyle concerning the Epistles of Phalaris. Bentley proved these epistles to be forgeries on principles which soon received the name of higher criticism.¹ It was inevitable that, together with other ancient writings, the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures should be subjected to this searching examination, (a) for the purpose of determining the integrity, authenticity, literary features, and credibility of the writings, (b) upon such principles as the following: 1) Accordance with supposed time, place and circumstances; 2) differences of style; 3) differences of opinion and conception; 4) citations of other authors; 5) positive testimony of other writings; 6) silence of other authorities as to the writing in hand.² These are the principles used alike by the friends and foes of Christianity in biblical criticism.

What now is the ground of, the philosophical reason for, the critical method in the investigation of the Bible, and what is its relation to theology? Criticism is a prominent factor in philosophical method which is necessary to theology. Theology can not, therefore, dispense with criticism. Dogmatism, skepticism, and criticism, represent the three attitudes of mind toward philosophical truth, and must be supplemented by "a new positive construction of those results that have stood the test of critical analysis." The true method of philosophical inquiry, therefore, "holds both analysis and synthesis in a living and progressive union, and requires for its working" the dogmatic, skeptical and critical attitude of mind. This statement is confirmed by the history of thought. The cosmological period of Greek philosophy was dogmatic towards its problems. The Sophists were skeptical towards the previous dogmatism, but they were not critical. Socrates was not only skeptical towards the dogmatic teaching of his age, but he was also critical with the purpose of dis-

¹ *A Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris*. London, 1699.

² C. A. Briggs, *Biblical Study*. N. Y., 1883, pp. 88-90.

tinguishing between the rational and the irrational. His doctrine of conceptions was reached by a most searching critical analysis. Plato followed his master and defined the conceptions or ideas, made them exact, and put them in proper relations with each other by critical analysis and synthesis. Aristotle dealt critically and constructively with the teachings of Plato, producing the second great system of permanent worth. The philosophers immediately following Aristotle when skeptical were not sufficiently critical with the purpose of an ultimate synthesis of the results of criticism.

In the middle ages skepticism and criticism could not be employed in the case of dogmas upon which the church had pronounced. With Descartes and his universal doubt, the necessity of the skeptical and critical attitude of mind was again recognized. Spinoza was too dogmatic. Leibnitz was skilled in the use of criticism. But with Kant, the free critical attitude and deliberate analysis were of great importance. Since Kant's day, the spirit of philosophy has been critical as it faces the results of the special sciences, receptive indeed, yet critically examining them in a system of general truths. Thus the attainment of all philosophical truth "leads from dogmatism through skepticism and critical inquiry back to a positive reconstruction."¹ In the employment of this philosophical method, perhaps it is enough to say that the controlling principles of the synthesis of tested results are the laws of non-contradiction and sufficient reason, the latter being the principle of which Leibnitz made such an extensive use.²

I have omitted the question of the reliability of our faculties for I must accept Lotze's position that it is unnecessary to subject mind itself to criticism, for the mind would have to be the critic of itself in every discussion of "theories of cognition." But the actual problems have compelled the discovery of the methods by which they may be solved. "The constant whetting of the knife is tedious, if it is not proposed to cut anything with it."³

Consequently, the philosopher assumes that his faculties in

¹ G. T. Ladd, *Introduction to Philosophy*. N. Y., 1890, chap. vi.

² *The Philosophical Works of Leibnitz*. Tr. New Haven, 1890, p. 378.

³ Lotze, *Metaphysics*. Clarendon Press, 1887, I. p. 16.

their normal activity are reliable and that there is reality and that it can be known: he tests all that is presented as material by reflective analysis; finally, he brings all that is clearly and distinctly known into one rational whole, free from contradiction and sufficient in its reason.

The task of the theologian is similar to that of the philosopher and he must adopt the philosophical method of critical analysis and synthesis. The theologian seeks to express his understanding of the world, men and history in relation to God in a system of thought. He assumes that his faculties are reliable and that, if there is a God, he can be known by men. Information is sought from the natural world, from the sciences, from ethics and religion—indeed, the whole range of existence is canvassed for truth concerning the ultimate Being “whom faith calls God.” Theology in its larger meaning is not the theology of Calvin, of the Westminster confession or of New England. Dorner suggested the larger meaning when he said: “Thetic (systematic) theology is that part of the entire system of theology which has to solve the problem presented by christian faith itself—the exhibition of christianity as truth.”¹ We have but to add the relation of Christianity to all other truth concerning men and God to discover the necessity of a still wider definition such as, “Theology is the science of God and of the relations between God and the universe.”²

It may be objected that this is only natural theology; certainly, we do not want a *supernatural* theology, for our God is the God of nature and of life. But the above definition means more than “natural” theology, because it is intended to include the possibility, the fact and the content of revelation. Many theologians seek first of all to show the rational probability of a revelation and, to some extent, the what, when and how of it. So far such a theologian may be called *natural*. Then is such a revelation a fact? Having proceeded so far as to conclude that the accepted canon of Scripture must be received as revelation, its truths will form material for theology.

¹ Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*. Tr. I. p. 17.

² A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*. P. 1.

The theologian, therefore, approaches the Bible, as something offered for his consideration in the formation of the doctrine of God, with the question, What is the truth revealed? The people, the author, the age, customs, language and mode of thought, have all found some expression in the sacred literature. In the nature of the case, the determination of points like these decides the understanding of the revelation. But the process of determining such points in order to reach the meaning of Scripture and, therefore, the truth revealed, is what is signified, as I understand it, by the name of the higher criticism whose purpose and principles have already been given. Since the meaning of Scripture as revelation cannot be gained without this critical investigation of many points a few of which I have just mentioned; and since the theologian must have that meaning, theology can not dispense with the higher criticism. If such a critical investigation discloses facts and truths not hitherto generally accepted, the theologian must form his system accordingly. No theologian, faithful to the philosophical method of procedure, will fail to recognize that his business is to accept facts and critically systematize them although it may mean the birth of a new theology.

Again, if the purpose of the critical examination of Scripture is kept clearly in mind, and if the principles of criticism are properly used, then there should be as much uniformity in results as in the unity of truth itself, but results are infinitely varied. I think that the conclusions reached by different writers show that prejudices and presuppositions, not the purpose and principles of the higher criticism, cause three classes of investigators, namely: the dogmatist, the rationalist and the evangelical critic, of each of whom I wish to speak. I shall endeavor to show that only the evangelical critic has any ground for expecting the theologian to accept and utilize his conclusions.

Who is the mere dogmatist? It is he who has an opinion, not worthy of being called an *a priori* theory, to be supported by proof-texts. Such a man uses Scripture only to confirm what he thinks the meaning should be. The rationalist and the evangelical critic remain. The difference between them lies in the assumptions and prejudices with which each approaches the

Scriptures. I will now endeavor to show, historically, how these presuppositions have grown up, what they are, and to which side our preference should be given.

What is the rationalist? He is the representative of a great movement of thought extending over several centuries. Lecky says that rationalism is a "certain cast of thought or bias of reasoning which has during the last three centuries gained a marked ascendancy in Europe. This spirit leads men on all occasions to subordinate dogmatic theology to the dictates of reason and of conscience, and, as a necessary consequence, greatly to restrict its influence upon life. It predisposes men in history to attribute all kinds of phenomena to natural rather than miraculous causes; in theology, to esteem succeeding systems the expressions of the wants and aspirations of that religious sentiment which is planted in all men; and, in ethics, to regard as duties only those which conscience reveals as such."¹

Rationalism was closely connected with and followed upon deism. Indeed, rationalism is the theory of knowledge in a deistic metaphysical system. Deism found its origin in the philosophy of Bacon and Locke, which had without the intention of its authors an injurious influence upon evangelical Christianity, for it gave great prominence to nature and natural laws, and allowed too small a place for the operation of the divine. God existed, but was not immanent in nature and government. The following was its creed so far as it had one: "When the natural order of the universe was first established, everything was in force which was necessary for human development. Christianity is not at all a necessity. All the good which we find to obtain in Christianity existed originally. It is only a republication of the first order. Revelation is not only not a divine thing, but is positively superfluous. There is no such thing as a recreation of the moral nature of man. His highest development is the result of the happy growth of his native forces."² But Locke's philosophy was logically and historically the forerunner of that of Hume who said, in his *Essay on Miracles*, that "a miracle is a violation of the

¹ W. E. H. Lecky, *Rationalism in Europe*. N. Y., 1890, p. 17.

² J. F. Hurst, *Short History of the Christian Church*. N. Y., 1893, p. 308.

laws of nature ; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined." In general it may be said that deism emphasized the inviolability of natural law and the merely mechanical view of the world.

Deism was translated into France, then into Switzerland and Germany, where it prepared the way for the reign of rationalism. Especially in Germany, the movement acquired a pantheistic coloring and a tendency to look upon the world and history as a logical development which culminated in the dialectic of Hegel, whose philosophy, by awakening biblical criticism, has indirectly done much towards determining the place of Christ in modern theology.

The history of this movement begins in the mathematical method of knowledge. Everything, according to deism, happened and was ruled by the laws of mechanics; or mathematical laws, of which the parallelogram of forces was the representative. If the world of nature was built upon such laws, certainly the world of thought must be understood by the mathematical method or theory of knowledge. Mathematics rest upon a few simple axioms and have a force and clearness which are irresistible. Kant's problem in a later age was to give synthetic judgments *a priori*, the certainty and validity which without question belonged to mathematics. But, before Kant's day, Descartes, himself the inventor of analytical geometry and a great mathematician, sought to apply the mathematical method to the problem of knowledge. He knew that mathematics rested on a few simple axioms from which was deduced the whole body of mathematical truth. Could he not find some self-evident truth which would be to the theory of knowledge what the axiom was to mathematics? That he might find this primary truth he resolved "never to accept anything for true which he did not clearly know to be such ; that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitancy and prejudice, and to comprise nothing more in my judgment than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all ground of doubt."¹ The result was the famous *cogito ergo sum*. This was

¹ *Discourse on Method*. Tr. 9th Ed., p. 19.

his axiomatic truth which could not be doubted and from which Descartes deduced the existence and nature of God and the world with demonstrative certainty.

The mathematical theory of knowledge found an extravagant expression in the Ethics of Spinoza with its axioms, propositions, demonstrations, corollaries, etc. The work has the appearance of being indisputable.

Already Anselm and Abelard had raised the question which was to occupy so much attention in the later centuries—the question, namely: Do we know because we believe or do we believe because we know? Anselm said: “*Neque enim quæro intelligere, ut credam; sed credo, ut intelligere.*”¹ Abelard replied: “*Qui credit cito, levis corde est.*”² Thus one said, belief or faith is before knowledge or reason; the other argued that belief followed conviction of truth as known. But both were ready to grant “that a satisfied reason was necessary to the completion, the continuance or even the reality of faith.” A similar thought appears in the *Théodicée* of Leibnitz, who sought to demonstrate the agreement of reason with faith. Leibnitz held a theory of knowledge which was in some respects a modification of that of Spinoza. It was, especially as presented by Wolf, of the mathematical type. Truth must be proved to be truth; if the proof is wanting, the proposition may be rejected. Wolf popularized the teachings of Leibnitz, carried his premises to unwarrantable conclusions and made the mathematical proof of all spiritual truths the demand of the common people. The decline in the spiritual life of Germany, largely due to the controversies of the Reformed and Lutherans, made it possible for the new speculative rationalism to gain a firm foothold. “The Leibnitz-Wolfian philosophy opened the way for the theological rationalism which was afterwards more fully developed in the school of Kant.”³

It was with Kant that the reason and the critical method

¹ “*Proslogium.*” I. Opera, p. 30 (Ed. 1721).

² “*Introd. ad Theol.*” Opera, p. 1051 (unique).

³ Ueberweg, *Hist. of Philosophy*. II. 113. Rationalism was introduced into theology by Semler, 1725–1792.

became supreme. The dogmatism of metaphysics and theology was so confident in its knowledge that Kant said: "I had therefore to remove knowledge in order to make room for belief."¹ He destroyed knowledge of the supersensuous as lying beyond experience. But the practical reason restored the God which the pure reason destroyed. The categorical imperative made God a new power for the conscience of his time.

Beginning with Kant and ending with Hegel, we find a highly speculative Christology in each of these transcendental philosophies, and it was the attempt to apply Hegel's philosophy to the life and history of Christ which brought about the reaction against rationalism, gave birth to modern New Testament criticism and new importance to the investigation of the Old Testament, and drew a sharp line between the rationalist and the evangelical critic. Let us briefly review this movement.

Kant was quite ready to conceive religion very much in the form of the current rationalism. He emphasized the conscience and morality. The worth of Christianity was the purity of its moral spirit which depended on the person of its founder. The interesting point for us in this discussion is Kant's view of Christ's historical character. God had from eternity an ideal of what man should be. This ideal was his own image forever before him. When this ideal is incorporated in man, man may be regarded as the son of God. In Christ, the moral ideal was personalized, and so Christ was God incarnate, who, setting forth the eternal divine ideal of man, showed what man should be. I understand Kant to mean in his "Religion Within the Limits of Pure Reason," that whoever (humanity in general) fulfils the ideal, which for us is to be sought in the reason, may have applied to him the predicates which in the Scriptures and in the teachings of the church are given to Christ, as such men are well-pleasing to God as sons of God.² It will be observed that this view almost entirely does away with Christ as a historical reality; or, if he existed, he was only of transient significance as

¹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, Supplement II.

² *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*; compare Ueberweg, *Hist. of Philosophy*. II. 186.

one of the perfect examples of the realized ideal of humanity ; others may have risen in the past and may arise in the future. Indeed humanity itself will be this son of God. Kant's Christology was a moral rationalism.

In Jacobi the suppression of the historical Christ was just as pronounced, but it was done differently. He gave much prominence to the heart, intuition and faith for reaching God, and excluded reason from religion. He gave no value to historical Christianity. It was all the inner ideal of what man ought to be. This ideal might be represented under the image and by the name of Christ.¹

In Fichte, Kant's subjective idealism reappeared in a pure and exalted morality. God was the moral order ; he who embodied the moral order perfectly would be God incarnate, the eternal Word become flesh. We all have our place in the moral order ; so had Christ who, as historical, was a necessary part of this moral order because law is in history, because without him the system could not be realized (any more than without us ?), or man attain his end as a religious being. But the temporal was made subordinate to the metaphysical. Religion is the union of God and the soul, and Jesus was personalized religion. Everyone who attains unity with God does it through him. Christ most perfectly set forth the moral order and all who do reveal it in themselves have the Logos incarnate in them.²

Schelling introduced a change into philosophy, identified object and subject, real and ideal, nature and spirit, in the absolute. Following Spinoza's use of the modes of thought and extension, Schelling regarded nature and spirit as the coördinate forms in which God manifests himself. History is the field of

¹ On the nature of intuition, faith, see Jacobi, *Werke*, II. pp. 127-163. "Es leuchtet uns ein, redlicher Mann ! wie sich dir alles was vom Menschen Göttliches kann angeschaut werden, und mit diesem Anschauen ihn erwecken zur Tugend und einem göttlichen Leben, unter dem Bilde und mit dem Namen Christus darstellt. Was Christus ausser dir, für sich gewesen, ob deinem Begriffe in der Wirklichkeit entsprechend oder nicht entsprechend, ja ob nur in dieser je vorhanden, ist in Absicht der wesentlichen Wahrheit deiner Vorstellung, und der Eigenschaft der daraus entspringenden Gesinnungen gleichgültig." *Werke*, III. 285, 286.

² *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, by A. M. Fairbairn. N. Y., 1893, p. 209.

spirit, and in it God is revealed. Schelling enlarged the province of religion beyond the merely moral to include all of man's life in relation to God. Applying this speculative view of God, nature and spirit to historical Christianity, Schelling developed a view which greatly influenced Hegel, and through Hegel Strauss, and through Strauss, modern criticism and theology. Schelling considered Christianity as preëminent because it represented the universe as a history, as a moral kingdom. God, the Ideal, appears in history as spirit. The incarnation of God or of the Ideal is the finite lifted up. I may rudely express the thought by saying,—the stain of being finite is washed out by being fully surrendered to the Ideal. Christ as embodying the Ideal in a single person represented an eternal and universal truth. The mere historical, the particular, is subordinate to the Ideal, the universal. "The Eternal Son of God, born from the essence of the Father of all things, is the finite itself as it exists in the eternal intuition of God, appearing as a suffering God, subjected to the fatalities of time; and this God, in the moment of his appearance in Christ, ends the world of finitude and opens that of infinitude or of the dominion of the spirit."¹ I offer with some hesitancy the following illustration of the meaning. In the philosophy of Leibnitz, each monad reflected the universe in miniature; God, or the supreme monad, reflected the universe most perfectly and was in turn reflected with varying degrees of completeness by the other monads. Likewise, in Schelling's philosophy, all religions before Christianity reflected imperfectly the Ideal, looking forward to Christianity which could most perfectly express that Ideal. Therefore, Christianity, most perfectly expressing that Ideal or the spiritual as the mode of God's manifestation (spinozistic term) is universal and eternal; but because universal and eternal it must never be confounded with a series of empirical facts. Consequently, Christ, as a real person whose life is recorded in the gospels, was, with Schelling, of little if any importance. To fix upon the historical Christ would be to lose the universal in the particular.

Hegel developed in a modified form Schelling's system of

¹ Schelling, *Werke*. V. p. 94.

identity in an absolute idealism. He showed how the absolute Idea unfolded itself, we may say, in syllogistic fashion. It is a thinking process made real, the perfect Reason perfectly thinking and realized. There is abstract thought which is externalized in nature and returns to itself in self-conscious spirit. In philosophy, we seek to go over in a thinking consideration the self-unfolding of the absolute reason. The object of philosophy is therefore the absolute Reason or God, his truth and his explication. Religion has the same object for the content of philosophy, and religion is the same in matter but different in form. For philosophy, God exists as *notion*, concept (Begriff) *i. e.*, as an object of pure thought; for religion, as (Vorstellung) idea or figurate conception, thought still clothed in sensuous form. All that belongs to the idea is religion; all that belong to the notion is philosophy; but materially, notion and idea are identical. Philosophy was religion in the form of thought, with all its truths reassured, articulated, explicated; religion was philosophy in the form of the idea with all its truths expressed in language, customs, and institutions, more or less sensuous, symbolical, figurative. Christianity is the perfect religion because its content agrees with that of the absolute philosophy, needing, in order to become it, only to be translated into the terms of the notion. Now, the point of their coincidence and identity is their common basis or ultimate object, the absolute of philosophy, the God of religion. Especially important for this discussion is Hegel's doctrine of the Trinity, which is in brief as follows: Abstract thought or idea in itself, universal, eternal, undeveloped, which may be designated as the Kingdom of the Father; thought or Idea moving out of itself and putting itself over against itself in the created universe. To this process, this being-for-another, may be applied the term, the Kingdom of the Son. Last is the return from manifestation into self or the Kingdom of the Spirit.¹

Hegel thus succeeded in providing an incarnation of the Absolute, but it was universal not particular, like the Christian which concerned a specific historical person. It was in the race not merely in Jesus of Nazareth. What of the real person of

¹ Hegel, *Werke*, XII. 184, developed pp. 177 ff.

Christ as a historical character in whom God was incarnate? Hegel evaded the difficulty by showing how the faith in the God-Man originated, "dealing with the faith as authenticating the fact rather than with the fact as creating and justifying the faith." Having the faith, Hegel did not need the Person.